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Qualitative (Focus Group) report
regarding health warning labels
and images on cigarette packages

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**HEALTH CANADA – OFFICE OF TOBACCO CONTROL
QUALITATIVE (FOCUS GROUP) REPORT
REGARDING HEALTH WARNING LABELS AND IMAGES
ON CIGARETTE PACKAGES**

FINAL REPORT

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Prepared for: Office of Tobacco Control

Prepared by: Environics Research Group Limited

This report has been commissioned by Health Canada's Health Protection Branch, Office of Tobacco Control. The opinions expressed in this report are strictly those of Environics Research Group Limited, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Environics Research Group Ltd. is pleased to present this report of national focus group findings to the Office of Tobacco Control of Health Canada. A series of eighteen focus groups were completed in the beginning of March 1999 – four groups in both Toronto and Montreal, three groups in Vancouver and Halifax and two groups in Sault-Ste-Marie and Trois-Rivieres.

The purpose of this project was to ascertain attitudes, beliefs and awareness among smokers to potential health messages, graphic images, marker words (e.g. "WARNING") and pictorials (e.g. skull-and-crossbones) that might be used on cigarette packages, as well as to gauge attitudes toward the placement and size of these potential messages and images.

The focus group participants were all smokers. Groups were divided by age, ranging from 13 to 60, and also by their characterization as "recent beginner" (has recently started smoking within the last year), "potential quitter" (has thought about quitting in the next six months) or "staunch smoker" (has not thought about quitting in the last 5 years). Most of the groups were mixed (both men and women), with the exception of the 13-14 year olds who were separated by gender in order to encourage more open discussion.

This report summarizes the overall findings of the project and discusses the results in detail. Copies of the discussion guide and selected material shown to participants are appended to the report.



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The groups were divided among the six cities as follows:

Toronto (Monday and Tuesday, March 1-2, 1999) 4 groups

potential quitters and recent beginners age 17-19
potential quitters age 25 and over
recent beginners age 13-14 (girls)
staunch smokers age 20-24

Montreal (Tuesday and Wednesday, March 2-3, 1999) 4 groups

potential quitters and recent beginners age 20-24
staunch smokers 25 years and over
recent beginners age 15-16
recent beginners/potential quitters age 20-24

Sault-Ste-Marie (Thursday, March 4, 1999) 2 groups

recent beginners age 15-16
staunch smokers age 25 and over

Trois-Rivières (Thursday, March 4, 1999) 2 groups

recent beginners age 13-14 (boys)
potential quitters 25 years and over

Halifax (Friday and Saturday, March 5-6, 1999) 3 groups

recent beginners age 13-14 (girls)
potential quitters and recent beginners age 17-19
potential quitters 25 years and over

Vancouver (Friday and Saturday, March 5-6, 1999) 3 groups

recent beginners age 13-14 (boys)
staunch smokers age 25 and over
potential quitters age 20-24

2.0 SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

Participants were quite supportive of anti-smoking initiatives. As we have observed elsewhere in our past research, smokers are generally quite concerned about the health impacts of smoking, and most support government action to try to prevent young smokers from starting and to encourage smokers of all ages to quit.

Clearly, smokers were open to the idea of new messages and warning labels on cigarette packages. Smokers have typically memorized all of the current warning labels and are not paying much attention to them since they have seen the same messages for so long.

They were very supportive of graphic images of health effects on cigarette packages.

In assessing the possible health information messages, certain messages resonate very strongly in both English and French. In English, the most effective messages were “Save Yourself”, “Smoke Free Tax Free”, “Sexy?” and “Baby Wants to Breathe”, and in French “La cigarette brule votre sante et votre argent” (Smoke free, Tax Free), “Bebe veut respirer” (Baby wants to Breathe), “Sexe et cigarette: ca vous allume?” (Sexy?) and “Longue vie aux ex-fumeurs” (Long Live the Ex-Smoker).

AS WITH THE HEALTH MESSAGES, THERE WERE MANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH GROUPS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF WARNING LABELS. IT WAS RELATIVELY EASY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE MESSAGES THAT RESONATED AND THE ONES THAT WERE SIMPLY INEFFECTIVE. IN ENGLISH, THE MOST EFFECTIVE “ONE-LINERS” WERE “SMOKING CAN CAUSE A SLOW AND PAINFUL DEATH”, “45,000 CANADIANS WILL DIE THIS YEAR FROM SMOKING”, “CARBON MONOXIDE IS A COLOURLESS, ODOURLESS, POISONOUS GAS ALSO FOUND IN AUTOMOBILE EXHAUST”, “SMOKING IS A WEAKNESS, NOT A STRENGTH” AND “YOU SMOKE, YOU STINK”. IN FRENCH, THE MOST EFFECTIVE ONES WERE “YOU SMOKE, YOU STINK”, “SMOKING SHORTENS YOUR BREATH AND DECREASES YOUR ENERGY LEVEL”, “SMOKING CAN CAUSE A SLOW AND PAINFUL DEATH”, “45,000 CANADIANS WILL DIE THIS YEAR FROM SMOKING” AND “SMOKING IS A WEAKNESS, NOT A STRENGTH”.

Participants tended to like the messages that were personalized (you smoke, you stink, smoking decreases your energy level), that struck at their fundamental fears of dying (especially a slow and painful death, 45,000 will die this year from smoking) or at their social fears of acceptance (you stink, smoking is a weakness).

In all of the groups, participants were extremely positive and impressed with visual images of the cancerous mouth, lungs and brain. The mouth was seen to be the most impressive because the mouth is what we see in a person, whereas the lungs are inside. Many participants said that if these images were on cigarette packages, they would be afraid to let anyone see their packs and they would be more motivated to try to quit.

Text with pictures was also powerful. The picture of the child was seen as a good idea but the child should look unhappy or sick, not smiling. The bar chart was also seen as a good

way of illustrating the “45,000 Canadians die” message that was so well received.

Most thought that putting these pictures directly on cigarette packages was a very good idea. Participants thought these pictures would capture a whole new segment of people who are currently ignoring the text warning messages.

Pictures accompanied by hard facts were seen as positive. Some blunt humour was somewhat acceptable as expressed in the messages “you smoke you stink” and “sexy?”.

People did not need to have personal experience with these health risks for the warnings to be credible. Very few people actually get mouth cancer in Canada, yet the mouth cancer picture was well received and was seen as believable. You smoke through your mouth so oral effects make sense. However, the image of the gangrene foot, while shocking, was not believable to most.

The mock-ups were very well received in all groups. Only a few participants had objections to the idea that cigarette packages should be covered in health information. Most were very accepting of the idea and expected government to play a role in prevention.

However, some participants felt it was overkill to have so much information and that people might not read any of it. Others admitted that they would eventually read it all – even the text on the back of the slide.

In terms of placement of health messages and other information on the packages there were some clear patterns:

Pictures: All pictures of lungs and mouths must be placed on the front of the packages. Some images might be placed on the back of the slide or on the lip as well, but the front is seen as the most effective.

Toxic constituents: Most people preferred this on the side of the package, as this is a typical place for lists of ingredients on consumer products.

Icons (coffin, skull, and tombstone) were seen as silly and “cartoon-like” (childish and amateur).

Red marker words: These were not a high priority, although anything in red or other colours was regarded as eye-catching.

Health warning messages: These were very good on the front – longer more detailed messages could go on the back of the slide as well.

1-800# and website: These were very good on the lip of the slide, where they were very conspicuous.

“Do Not Litter”: This was seen as a waste of space and not particularly useful.

“Underage Sale Prohibited”: Many felt it would only encourage teens to smoke. Most feel that underage smokers know how to get cigarettes easily.

The flat slides received much praise. People liked the colours, and the yellow highlighting and underlining was also seen to be very effective. Many people commented on the good quality of the information.

The gangrene foot received contradictory responses. Initially people were disgusted and the picture especially affected the 13 and 14 year olds, but most participants quickly became sceptical. It was seen as going too far and therefore not a credible warning.

KOZ cigarettes were seen to be a great package and very appealing to young people. The target is clearly young teens (15 and under) and teenage girls in particular, as they have a very “cute” look – sleek and portable.

Most participants in all groups favoured 60 percent of the package being devoted to health information. They felt that this made the messages legible and still left some room for the manufacturer to identify the brand.

Smokers generally supported the health initiatives discussed in the groups and even staunch smokers were more resigned than angry with the possibility that the government would regulate cigarette companies to place more health information on cigarette packages. There was no sympathy whatsoever expressed for the cigarette companies.

3.0 SMOKING BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDES AND HEALTH RISKS

The sessions began with a discussion of smoking behaviour (when and why the participants began smoking) and attitudes about the health risks of smoking.

As we have found in our past research, the main reasons people say they start smoking are peer pressure, wanting to be “cool”, a sense of curiosity, and having family or friends around them who smoke.

Most of the participants claimed they started to smoke in junior high or high school, but some stated as early as grade 3.

All the participants were aware of the health risks associated with smoking. However many, especially the recent beginners or staunch smokers, believed the risks are often exaggerated (“I could get hit by a bus and die too”), or simply too far ahead to contemplate (“It won’t be me”). Youth or recent beginners often mentioned that they were planning to quit before the health risks affected them (“when I have kids I will stop” or “I can quit if I want”), even though many felt they were already addicted and could not stop at the present time if they wanted (“I’m definitely hooked”, “I’m addicted”).

Many participants with children worried about the health effects about smoking around their children, and avoided this practice if possible (smoked outside or in a separate room). However, many participants remembered watching their parents or family members smoke, which was a major reason many started smoking.

While most participants tended to focus on the more dramatic and deadly effects of cancer and other related diseases, many smokers also mentioned that they were already feeling the effects of smoking (less energy, inability to do sports, walk up stairs, etc.). Quite a few of the participants (especially among teens) mentioned that they used inhalers.

4.0 CURRENT AWARENESS OF WARNING LABELS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

All the participants were aware of the health messages on cigarette packages and could repeat the health messages in detail. Most of the participants however, were bored with the messages and claimed they did not read them anymore. “The messages are a joke” “[Messages] could be better”, “I don’t notice them anymore”. Participants are becoming less influenced by the current health messages and think they can be improved substantially. Some smokers are also superstitious about certain messages (“Mom will only buy the packs with ‘smoking harms your baby’ on them”).

However, while some of the potential quitters in all the age groups mentioned that they thought the current messages could be changed or improved, they still felt it was important to convey health information to the consumer. “I would like to hear more”, “I want to hear about the effects”, “If we allowed anybody to do what we do to ourselves, we would call it murder”, were some of these comments.

Others were more fatalistic, saying that they were addicted and the messages simply reminded them how “stupid” they were. “I paid attention at first, but I don’t read them now – what is the point if I can’t quit?”. Others felt the messages were simply going to keep coming, and that it was the government’s role to require the information but it did not affect them. “I could care less about the messages, I am sick of feeling guilty and I don’t want to hear about it any more, but I know that most people do [want to hear more]”.

Most of the adults said they thought the concept of health messages was very important, not necessarily for themselves, but for children contemplating starting smoking. “I never read them, I’m only concerned for the kids”. Many of the youth, on the other hand, did not care about the health messages and believed the health risks were implausible.

5.0 RATING OF HEALTH INFORMATION MESSAGES

While each of the 11 messages resonated to some degree with participants in various age groups and smoking categories, it is clear some messages affected participants more readily than others. Some messages worked in both French and English, but there were also some differences.

Several messages were effective in a number of age and smoking categories:

English

“Save Yourself”

“Smoke Free Tax Free”

“Sexy?”

“Baby wants to Breathe”

French

“La cigarette brule votre sante et votre argent” (Smoke Free, Tax Free)

“Bebe veut respirer” (Baby wants to Breathe)

“Sexe et cigarette: ca vous allume?” (Sexy?)

“Longue vie aux ex-fumeurs” (Long Live the Ex-Smoker)

DETAILED RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL HEALTH MESSAGES

1. Save yourself (Eviter le pire)

Many participants thought this message was effective in English (especially in Toronto and Vancouver), and the message appealed to both the younger and older respondents (especially the 13-14 year olds and 25 and older). Participants were interested in hearing new facts that they did not know; particularly that smoking kills more people than other accidents and diseases combined.

Some findings to note:

45,000 – While the number is impressive, many mentioned that they would like to know what proportion of the Canadian population that is. Others mentioned that the number should be put in perspective (for example, “45,000 die – the size of a city like Dartmouth, Nova Scotia” or “45,000 – the same amount as 200 jumbo jet crashes a year”).

The message fell a little flat for the 15-19 year olds – again, they were not particularly concerned about the health risks and did not believe smoking will affect them, while the younger smokers who are just starting and the older smokers who are feeling the effects were more susceptible to these factual statements.

- The last two statistics on lung cancer might be too much – many participants thought this could be a whole separate message.
- It was often noted that people frequently hear warnings about drugs, AIDS, car accidents, etc., but do not know that the harm from tobacco tops them all.
- Men particularly liked the factual approach in this message.

However, some Quebec participants responded negatively toward this message:

45,000 is an impressive number, but out of how many Canadians?

How could you prove that cigarettes were directly responsible for the deaths of 45,000 Canadians? (credibility problem)

Why were they attacking cigarettes instead of other health factors that may harm your health?

Too many statistics, too impersonal – no direct reference to their personal experience or their daily lives.

2. Cigarettes Blow (Respirer à mort)

A few participants liked this message, but most found it tiresome or preachy. The slogan seemed to catch their attention, but not always in a good way. Some found it tried too hard to use “cool” expressions to target youth.

Some findings to note:

Many simply tuned the message out, as too many diseases are just listed on and on, leading to a feeling of hopelessness. Many mentioned that they would be more susceptible to hearing the specifics or effects of one disease (emphysema or others) in a more factual way, rather than listing all the negative things that can happen to smokers.

Many disliked the last sentence “cigarettes take your breath away” and found it was “cheesy” and tried to be too catchy. Some thought many other things take your breath away (like sports), and that this was not necessarily a bad thing.

The message received a better reception in French, but the reaction to the rest of the information was similar to the English groups. Some comments specific to the French groups include: overall message very morbid, too many subjects at once, lack of credibility because some non-smokers have asthma, and many of the youth are not affected by the health consequences of smoking.

3. Cigarettes are garbage (Fumer, c'est polluer)

While this message appealed to some environmentally conscious participants, especially in Vancouver (and in Quebec - the younger respondents to a slight extent), most did not find this message particularly effective for a variety of reasons:

Most felt that cigarettes were not a big polluter compared to other contributors (industry and transport) and that if the trees were not used for cigarettes they would be used for something else.

Many did not see pollution as an individual responsibility, but that of society as a whole. This is not in itself a strong reason to quit.

Mentioning that 50 billion cigarette butts are thrown away every year made it seem like the problem was too big to handle or change. Many found the argument that cigarette butts are toxic and then enter the earth to be somewhat persuasive (although some thought they were organic, like a banana peel!), but most simply did not care.

4. Hook, line and stinker (Accro à vie; accro à mort)

While some found themselves attracted to the title, many were disappointed with the message. Most felt that there was nothing new included in this message, nothing to learn, that it was not very motivational, and repeated old information. Moreover, many felt the message implied it was acceptable to smoke, and sent a mixed message by saying that half of smokers quit.

Other comments:

Some liked the sentence "Most smokers become addicted teens" and would like to see this re-worked into a more effective message.

The word "accro" in French is a word used only by the very young.

5. Smoke free = tax free (La cigarette brule votre sante et votre argent)

This message was very effective in both English and French, and particularly resonated well with adults. It was perceived as concrete and credible, and touched people where they could all believe it – their wallets! Participants were surprised to see such a high total dollar amount.

Other points to note:

A number of participants said the English title could be reworked, since many did not understand the "tax free" part of the title. The title worked much better in French, and perhaps could be made somewhat similar in English. "Smoking not only damages your health, it burns a hole in your wallet".

It was effective because the dollar amount refers to what smokers must often be deprived of

because of the cost of their habit - vacations were frequently mentioned. Youth did not seem particularly concerned about the costs, since they do not pay for most things. Many youth also mentioned that their parents actually buy them their cigarettes, so it is even less of a problem. Therefore, the money argument might be doubly effective if directed towards adults who not only smoke themselves, but provide for their children as well. This item elicited some discussion about how much easier it became to buy cigarettes after the prices dropped a few years ago.

6. Sexy? (Sexe et cigarette: ca vous allume?)

The message was very well received in English (especially among youth, 13-19 year olds, and women), but was not particularly effective in the French groups.

Participants (especially youth and women) appreciated that the message focussed on the more superficial, negative aspects of smoking that they inherently fear (yellow teeth, smelly clothes and bad breath). Older women were susceptible to the premature ageing point. These points also counteract the “cool” image of smoking.

Many were surprised about the impotence factor and would like to hear more about this issue. (How many smokers does it affect? What age? How are you sure impotence is from smoking?). There is some potential for a separate message on impotence that would target men, who say they would like to know more.

The title in French is somewhat alluring (in a negative sense) as some participants in the French groups made the association with smoking cigarettes after sex, or cigarettes being sexy and alluring, making it a somewhat dangerous theme in French.

While not a problem in English, many participants in the French groups found that the second part of the message lacked credibility.

7. Baby wants to breathe (Bébé veut respirer)

The message had strong appeal to a minority of participants in all age groups and both language groups, and many participants thought the message should continue to be promoted. While some men claimed they would not want to have their partner smoke while pregnant, the message was particularly effective among women.

Other points to note:

Unfortunately, some women see pregnancy as the only reason to stop, and then pick up the habit once again after the baby is born. There is an opportunity to promote a more holistic message to women to stop smoking for the sake of themselves and their children. Some mentioned that while they knew it was not “right” to smoke when they were pregnant, some of their doctors implied that the stress of quitting might also damage the baby.

The message was particularly effective with those who have not had children yet (15-24). Interestingly, those who had children or had friends with children were more prone to cynicism by promoting stories like “well, my friend smoked and she had a healthy 12 pound boy”.

It was effective by making the point that the fetus is entirely dependent on the mother (while with children you can smoke in another room or outside).

It was also pointed out that people now frown upon pregnant women smoking.

8. Do your kids a favour (Faites de l’air)

This message appealed to some respondents (17 and older), but most participants were not moved by this message in either French or English. Many felt they already knew that was “not good” to smoke around children, but were reluctant to believe that smoking actually caused asthma or SIDS and would like to see more credible information on these linkages.

Among the participants, men, surprisingly, were more likely to find this believable and effective, and the message may have some potential among fathers of young children who see themselves as role models for their children. This message also made many smokers remember how they were exposed to their parents smoking and how smoking sets a bad example for children.

Many stories were repeated by participants of their children being asthmatic or coughing a lot.

9. Long live the ex-smoker (Longue vie au ex-fumeurs)

This message appeared to be very effective in Quebec, but fell flat in many of the English groups. While the participants in the French groups seemed to appreciate the positive nature of the message (as opposed to factual or preachy), many participants did not find it believable. In other words, while the positive approach was appreciated, many felt that this message implied that everything was going to be fine, and that smoking was not that bad after all since it appeared it did not take too long to recover.

Some other points to note:

Many liked the idea of the 1-800 line (especially the potential quitters), however, most were curious as to the service that it would provide: what kind of counselling? voice mail? (they wanted a person to answer).

Many wanted to know more information as to specific recovery times: how long it takes to have the lungs of a non-smoker after you stop, etc.

Some participants mentioned a Lung Association poster that showed pictures of lungs 24 hours after quitting, 48 hours after quitting, a week, etc. Many said they would find this kind of positive, specific information convincing.

Some mentioned that they would appreciate ads (testimonials) featuring smokers who have quit, and hearing them say how good they felt – these would be motivational.

10. Your lungs, your choice (Votre choix de poumons)

This message was somewhat effective in both French and English.

Many associated the message with the image of a black lung; therefore linking this message with an image in print format might be more effective than a stand-alone message.

Other comments:

Many liked the “choice” theme included in “Your lungs, your choice” (especially the 15-19 year olds and some staunch smokers).

This message elicited many comments about the TV ad featuring the “cigarette cocktail” being squeezed at the bar.

11. Lights bite (Ne les prenez pas à la légère)

This message did not resonate strongly in either English or French.

Most participants claimed to know that light cigarettes were not healthier than regular cigarettes (even though many did not know that the filter makes the difference, as we found in our previous research on this topic).

Other comments:

The 1-800 number was not as effective here as it was in “Long live the ex-smoker”. This set of facts was “good to know” but not a strong motivator to quit.

6.0 RATING OF WARNING LABELS

AS WITH THE HEALTH MESSAGES, THERE WERE MANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH GROUPS, AND IT WAS RELATIVELY EASY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE LABELS THAT RESONATED AND THOSE THAT WERE LESS EFFECTIVE.

AMONG THE WARNING LABELS THAT PROVED EFFECTIVE ARE:

English

Smoking can cause a slow and painful death
45,000 Canadians will die this year from smoking
Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, poisonous gas also found in automobile exhaust
Smoking is a weakness, not a strength
You smoke, you stink

French

You smoke, you stink
Smoking shortens your breath and decreases your energy level
Smoking can cause a slow and painful death
45,000 Canadians will die this year from smoking
Smoking is a weakness, not a strength

In general, participants liked the messages that were personalized (you smoke, you stink, smoking decreases your energy level), that struck at their fundamental fears of dying (especially a slow and painful death, 45,000 will die this year from smoking) or at their social fears of acceptance (you stink, smoking is a weakness).

Participants also appreciated fresh or new ideas, and tended to dismiss the messages that have been displayed on the packs over the last few years. Therefore messages #3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 did not score highly.

Participants seemed to appreciate the shock factor (you smoke you stink, 45,000 will die this year) and were not offended by it. After so many years of looking at the same messages, many were open to new information and approaches to get their attention.

Most were not interested in the lesser-known toxic constituents, and they either skipped or dismissed the messages that concentrated on these chemicals (aminobiphenyl, nitrosamines). However, while the carbon monoxide message did not work for all (English but not French), many associated the message with carbon monoxide poisoning in the home or the distasteful image of sucking on a car exhaust – therefore, this message has great potential in a TV ad or other visual format.

Many doubted the statistics and tend to glaze over them, especially the reference to the number of 12-14 year olds that smoke. Most believed the numbers were much higher in their experience and simply did not believe the incidence reported.

RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL WARNING LABELS

45,000 Canadians Will Die This Year From Smoking

Sentence was very effective in both French and English, especially among men.
Very factual, direct, new and somewhat shocking information.
'Will' die was much more effective than 'can' die.

4-Aminobiphenyl, A Banned Commercial Chemical, Causes Bladder Cancer

This label was not very effective among the groups.
Most participants never got past the first word and had no interest in reading further.
Many believed that if it is a banned commercial product, it must be in very small amounts in the cigarette - not credible.
Bladder cancer caught some attention (especially women), with potential use in a different message.
Assumption that if something is an additive (not a naturally occurring substance), the solution is to stop putting it in.

Cigarettes Cause Cancer

The label was not very effective in the groups; many participants liked the simplicity but most tuned out because they have heard it too often.
Statement is over-used "old news".
Many said "well, other things (coffee, etc.) cause cancer".

Cancer-Causing Tar Is A Sticky, Black Residue That Contains Hundreds Of Chemicals

A moderately effective label.
Not new – "cancer causing tar" has been seen before.
Many appreciated "sticky, black residue" however, and associated it with an image of a black lung (especially 13-14 year olds).

Smoking Can Kill You

Not a particularly effective label.
Some said it would be more effective as "smoking will kill you".
Most have heard it before, and although some said it still holds potential, they are tired of hearing about it for now.
Reaction that "well, lots of things can kill you".
Still resonated with some people who avoided cigarette packages with this message.

Carbon Monoxide Is A Colourless, Odourless, Poisonous Gas Also Found In Automobile Exhaust

One of the most effective labels, and seen as something new.

However, many also stated the message should clearly state that cigarettes contain carbon monoxide – so the message could read “carbon monoxide, as found in the cigarette you are smoking, is a colourless... etc.”.

Many said they worried about carbon monoxide in their homes and garages, but have never made the association with cigarettes.

Potential for powerful images in an ad campaign – many thought of themselves as sucking on an exhaust pipe.

Many associated the message with suicide, and some said they were virtually committing suicide by smoking.

Tobacco Smoke Can Harm Your Children

Did not capture much attention.

Still worked slightly with mothers because of the guilt factor.

Most have heard this too much before.

Many said the argument works better with a focus on infants, since they do not see children as being as helpless as infants.

Cigarettes Are Addictive

Particularly ineffective among the groups.

Again, while true, this message has been so overused that smokers no longer listen to the message (many responded, “ya, so what?”).

Must adapt or change the message of addiction if it is to be effective (i.e.: cigarettes are as addictive as heroin, etc.)

Cigarettes Cause Strokes And Heart Disease

The label was somewhat effective

More believable among 25 and older as many knew someone who had smoked and had a heart attack or stroke, but it also resonated among the 13-14 year olds who have not heard this message as much as other smokers.

Exposure To Hydrogen Cyanide Can Lead To Headaches, Dizziness, Nausea, Vomiting And Death

The label was somewhat effective.

Message was unclear for some, and should read “exposure to hydrogen cyanide contained in cigarettes can lead to”; otherwise it lacks credibility.

Message seemed to resonate with 13-14 year olds, perhaps because many were just starting to smoke, and still experienced the headaches, dizziness and nausea associated with first experiences in inhaling cigarettes.

Women were more prone to listen to this message than men.

Some reactions included “I have seen people faint at parties from smoke” and “I

felt sick when I first started”.

A) Less Than 8 Percent of 12 - 14 Year Olds Smoke

Not at all effective.

Message was confusing and lacked credibility. What is the implied message? The intended message needs to be clearer.

Resonated to a slight extent among 15-16 year olds – many mentioned that that was the age when they started smoking and were worried their younger siblings will start (they do not want them to, think they are too young). There is a possibility for this message to be directed at older siblings, since the idea of their younger siblings picking up smoking seems to touch a nerve with many. Most doubt the statistical reliability of “less than 8% of 12-14 year olds smoke” – most believed it to be much higher (younger and older respondents). If a child’s own peers smoke, that is the only reality that mattered to them.

B) Over 90 Percent of 12-14 Year Olds Don't Smoke

Even less effective than A), especially among the 13-19 year olds.

Nicotine Is The Active Drug In Tobacco And Is Addictive

This label was not particularly effective, since most have heard this too often and do not pay attention.

Many believed that smokers should still be informed about the addictive nature of cigarettes, but this message did not interest them.

Slight reaction among 15-16 year olds – many mentioned that they did not believe they would become addicted but now find they cannot quit.

Cigarettes Cause Fatal Lung Disease

Somewhat effective, especially among 13-14 year olds (again, they have not been saturated with these messages and found them somewhat informative).

Many still felt people should know the risks, like lung disease, but were tired of the messages that they have heard for awhile – needs a fresh approach or wording (images come to mind when lungs are mentioned).

Message resonated slightly better with men.

Nitrosamines Cause Cancer. They Are The Most Active Cancer-Causing Agent In Tobacco

Not at all effective – participants did not read past the first word (which many have never heard before), and did not respond to the cancer association.

Particularly ineffective among 13-19 year olds.

Smoking Can Cause A Slow And Painful Death

Very effective message that captured a strong response from all age groups, especially 13-24 year olds. It scared people and made them think.

Message focuses on the inherent fear that most smokers have of dying a slow and painful death from cigarette smoking – this aspect could be further developed.

Many mentioned the possibility of testimonials of real Canadians telling their stories of what cigarettes have done to them.

Smokers can be flippant about death, but ‘a slow and painful death’ is hard to be dismissive about.

Smoking Is A Weakness, Not A Strength

Somewhat effective in both English and French, especially among older participants who seemed to understand and recognize the underlying message.

Message needs to be reworked if it is to be targeted at younger groups (14 years and under) – they did not respond to it.

The message resonated more strongly with women.

While the message was somewhat disturbing (no one likes to admit they are weak), many participants admitted they are essentially weaker (in a physical sense) than they were prior to smoking and found that revelation disturbing.

This message prompted many participants to share their stories of what smoking has done to them (inhalers, incapacity to do sports, coughing, children have asthma).

One participant stated “When I think about it, I am paying to have cigarettes kill me, it’s crazy! If I would have paid more attention, maybe I wouldn’t have started. I wish someone would have told me”.

Smoking Shortens Your Breath And Decreases Your Energy Level

Very effective in French, somewhat effective in English.

Most smokers inherently know this and many admitted that smoking has slowed them down.

Message was effective because it was believable and smokers have experienced this effect – again, many participants had stories to tell about their former days playing sports.

More effective among women.

Some responses to the message included “It’s true, no smoker can deny this” and “I have 3 inhalers and I still smoke”.

Smoking During Pregnancy Can Harm The Baby

Message effective among a minority of participants in all age groups in English, especially 15 and older. However, the message was not effective for many participants in Quebec, and many felt it was overused.

Most participants were somewhat tired of hearing it, and most thought that everyone knows this information, but many, if not most, believed it still had to be stated (many participants voiced strong disapproval of women smoking when they are pregnant).

Many stated the message would be more effective if more new information was provided – for example, explaining incidence of SIDS or low birthweights or other complications resulting from smoking when pregnant (make a series of messages, not one message listing all the problems at once)

Message resonated more strongly with women.

Tobacco Smoke Causes Fatal Lung Disease In Non-Smokers

This message was not effective in English or French.

Most participants explained they really do not care about non-smokers. Many felt hostile toward non-smokers because smokers have been relegated to smoke in certain locations. Smokers feel that non-smokers can go elsewhere if the smoke bothers them, since “so many” areas are now smoke-free.

Many also stated that they are doubtful that second hand smoke actually harms others. They thought the dangers of second hand smoke were overrated.

“It’s not my problem” was a standard response.

It would be more effective to tie second hand smoke to the related impact on children and family members, and not non-smokers in general.

You Smoke, You Stink

Very effective, in both English and French – captured attention and exploited the shock factor. Most participants appreciated the new, fresh, humorous and blunt message that gets to the point.

Most smokers (if not all) were very worried about smelling because of their habit (especially younger smokers age 13-19 and women), and many stories were revealed about how smokers go about masking the smoking odour (constant teeth brushing, mouthwash, gum, perfume, etc). Many stated it was a constant preoccupation. “It is so true, it makes me think of what others think of me... it’s insulting but true”.

“It’s true, smoking makes me feel dirty”, “my kids tease me all the time because I smell like cigarettes”.

However, a few participants found it too harsh and insulting and would prefer not to be stigmatized with such a message on their pack of cigarettes.

7.0 RESPONSE TO THE GRAPHIC IMAGES

Participants were shown some mock ups of graphic images (pictures) from various health organizations that might be placed on cigarette packages. They were then asked to share their overall reactions to the images.

Here are the general impressions:

Mouth

The image of the mouth was very effective in the English groups; however, it was not as credible in the French groups.

Many were very shocked by the image and admitted that if they had to look at that image every day on their pack that they would think twice about smoking (especially women and young people).

- Participants in the English groups did not care that it was not particularly believable (in the sense that they had never known anyone personally who had mouth cancer), but said that it nonetheless was very effective for them because even the remote possibility of ever looking like that scared them. People smoke through their mouth, so a mouth image is credible.
- Participants in the French groups however, felt that this image, while shocking, was not believable to them – they would rather see a picture of yellow teeth instead.

Lungs

The image of the lungs was also very effective, as many people automatically think of the image of the lungs when they think of smoking, so it is not shocking, but a natural association that they expect to see.

Would like a better image of the lung since it was somewhat unclear; perhaps a label of a lung of smoker after 5 years, etc.

Stroke

The image of the brain and stroke received a lukewarm response, but many liked the idea. The image needs to be better; it was too detailed and blurry.

Child

The image of the child was well received by adults/parents, but mostly because it was a cute kid and not because of the associated health warning. If the message is to not smoke around kids, then many felt the image should be of an unhappy child, maybe picking up a pack of cigarettes or taking a cigarette out of the package.

Bar Graph

The bar graph received a lukewarm response. Since it was presented with the graphic images, it had less appeal than it might have on its own.

However, many thought it presented the information of “smoking kills 45,000 people” very effectively and would be good if it were one image that was rotated among

others.

Gangrene Foot

The image of the gangrene foot received tremendous attention, but generally lacked credibility. After the initial shock wore off and people read what it was about, they became doubtful of the information provided.

Too “over the top”.

Many participants linked gangrene to diabetes, not smoking.

8.0 RESPONSE TO BLACK AND WHITE PACKAGE WITH PICTURE OF CIGARETTE EMERGING FROM LUNGS

Participants were shown the black and white images on a package, of the lung with a cigarette coming out of it and asked about their opinion of this image.

Most were not particularly impressed with the black and white smoking lung image, and while this was the first package they were shown, most felt that it did not capture their attention to a great degree. Most felt that colour was essential if an image is to appear on cigarette packages.

Many participants had already suggested (unsolicited) an image of a black lung on the packs, but this particular image did not fulfil what they had in mind – it was not particularly realistic or attention grabbing.

9.0 RESPONSE TO CIGARETTE PACKAGE MOCK-UPS

Participants were shown an array of possible cigarette packages (12 in total) with different health messages and images (as discussed in the previous section) pasted on the packages. They were asked to fully explore the packages, to open the packages up and examine the sides and insides of the package in detail. Participants were then asked to share their general impressions.

Here are some of the general observations:

Participants clearly articulated that they are ready for new messages on cigarette packages and were open to seeing graphic images displayed as well. They wanted to see new messages constantly, and felt they would be more likely to read them if there were a wide variety of new messages on their packs. Factual information is fine, as long as it is credible. Messages should be as short as possible.

Generally, participants felt the mock-ups with the graphic images tended to interest them more.

Initially, many felt there was too much text – however, most felt that they would eventually read everything on the pack.

Many stated that the images should be on the front where they would have the strongest impact.

Many stated another key area for smoker's attention is the inside lip of the package (where people usually write phone numbers, grocery lists, etc.), and felt warning messages or a small graphic image would work well there.

Another good area for a message was the outside of the slide portion of the pack – so that when people open their pack, others also have the chance to see the message.

Most did not think the toxic constituent information should go on the front - they would not notice it any more there than on the sides. They wanted it back on the sides and thought health messages should go on the front coupled with a graphic image.

There was a mixed reaction to the 1-800 number and web site info (strong in French, lukewarm in English). Many appreciated the idea and liked the placement on the lip of the package, but many were doubtful they would actually use it. Several also wanted to know what kind of services would be there for them.

Most did not think the “do not litter” warning was effective or appropriate; it was a wasted message and wasted space.

Most thought the “underage sale prohibited” was also useless, in the sense that kids can obviously get their hands on cigarettes if they want them, and a warning label would just encourage them to regard smoking as more alluring.

Symbols such as the tombstone, skull and crossbones and coffin were not well received – many thought they were cartoon-like and ineffective. They were seen as amateur compared to the graphic images of the mouth, etc., and were seen as reminiscent of Halloween.

Warning messages such as “Poison” and “Danger”, did not capture peoples attention – “Warning” still works the best in red across the top of a pack.

10.0 RESPONSE TO SLIDE FORMATS IN COLOUR

PARTICIPANTS WERE ALSO SHOWN SOME EXAMPLES OF VARIOUS COLOURED SLIDES FROM HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT COULD BE PLACED INSIDE THE CIGARETTE PACKAGE AND THEN ASKED TO SHARE THEIR OVERALL IMPRESSIONS.

Here are some observations:

Generally, there was a very positive reaction to the coloured slides.

Most thought the colours captured their attention and made them want to read more.

Many felt there was a lot of information, but said they would not mind hearing new or factual information.

Some liked underlining, some liked highlighting – both were equally effective.

Many liked the 1-800 number on the lip of the package.

Reactions to the various messages were similar to reactions already detailed toward the other health messages. “Cancer”, “second hand smoke” and “risk to family” have been overused, but new information, like “impotence” or “addiction in cigarettes is the same as heroin or cocaine” captured attention. However, many would like to hear a wide variety of messages and stated they would probably read all.

Many thought that cigarettes would cover much of the information in a slide format.

11.0 RESPONSE TO THE KOZ CIGARETTE PACKAGE

PARTICIPANTS WERE ALSO ASKED TO SHARE THEIR REACTIONS TO A “KOZ” PACKAGE OF CIGARETTES. THIS BRAND OF CIGARETTES IS RELATIVELY NEW AND IS BEING MARKETED IN ONTARIO. THE PACKAGE IS SMALL, SLENDER AND SILVER.

Here are some of the overall reactions to the package:

There is no doubt this package held great appeal to the youngest groups tested, particularly the 13 to 14 year old girls. However, the appeal was not limited to this group - some of the girls who were a little older (15-19) said they liked the shape and appearance of the package because it was slick and could fit into a purse or pocket more easily, while some of the boys (15-19) also thought the silver looked appealing.

Many of the youth (13-19) stated they would definitely purchase the brand once to try it out because of the appearance.

12.0 AMOUNT OF SPACE ON CIGARETTE PACKAGES DEVOTED TO HEALTH INFORMATION

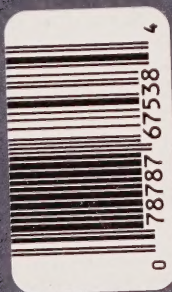
As a final exercise, participants were asked how much space should be devoted to health messages on cigarette packages. Participants were given the option of choosing either 25 percent (the amount currently on packages), 50 percent or 60 percent of the package being devoted to health messages.

Here are the overall responses to the sizing options provided:

Most participants in both the French and English groups favoured a greater amount of space being devoted to health messages.

Most participants favoured 60 percent of the package being covered by health messages, but emphasized the importance of colour images and graphics as a key component and short messages that were new and factual.

Some of the younger groups (13-16 years old) were not particularly interested in increasing the size of the warning messages, and they claimed they did not read them. However, if the coverage of the packages was to be increased, it was important to use coloured images and pictures to capture their attention.



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10%

